

FOREWORD

One of the objects of the *Indian Institute of Public Administration* is to promote the study of public administration by undertaking, organising and facilitating lectures and conferences. Keeping this in view, the Institute took advantage of Sir Paul Sinker's visit to Delhi in March 1955 and invited him to address its members, on 'Problems of Recruitment and Training of Civil Servants in the United Kingdom'. A resume of Sir Paul's talk is given in the pages that follow.

The magnitude and scope of the activities of public service commissions in India have greatly increased since the attainment of independence; and the problems of recruitment and training of civil servants have been receiving increasing attention at the hands of administrators, academicians and public men. Recently, the Government of India have set up a committee to examine how far and at what levels the possession of a university degree should be necessary for recruitment to government service. We hope that the authoritative account of the prevailing British practice in matters of recruitment and training, given by Sir Paul in his talk, will be useful in promoting a reconsideration of our own methods and techniques.

New Delhi,
1st May 1955.

D. G. Karve
Director.

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1824-1825

PROBLEMS OF RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE U. K.

Addressing an informal gathering of about 60 members of the Institute on 'Problems of Recruitment and Training of Civil Servants', on Saturday, the 5th March, 1955, Sir Paul Sinker, formerly the First Civil Service Commissioner in the U.K. and now the Director General of the British Council, emphasised the common administrative background between India and the U.K. He pointed out that the prevalent British practice concerning the recruitment and training of public servants had its origin in the Macaulay Reforms of the Indian Civil Service. While the growth and development of the civil services in the two countries were inter-related, there existed, however, certain significant differences in their structure. The British Civil Service, unlike its Indian counterpart, did not include officials of the local government and the judiciary, the police, teachers, and personnel of nationalised industries (except the postal department).

There were in all about 650,000 civil servants in the U.K. Of these, about 3,500 belonged to what was generally known as the administrative class. There were also many professional, scientific and technical personnel. His talk, Sir Paul said, was largely concerned with problems of recruitment and training of the administrative class only.

The British Civil Service Commission dealt, Sir Paul observed, mostly with recruitment from outside the civil service, though certain categories of appointments by promotion from within the department had been brought under its purview recently.

For all other personnel matters, the Treasury acted as the central personnel agency.

Sir Paul explained that the great effectiveness of the Civil Service Commission in the U.K. was mainly due to two conditions peculiar to that country. These conditions had to be constantly borne in mind for understanding the British system of recruitment. The first was an unwritten convention, accepted by all the parties, that the Civil Service Commissioners should be left absolutely independent in the exercise of their functions. The second condition related to the tradition and habit of close and friendly consultation and co-operation between the Civil Service Commissioners on the one hand and the Treasury, the individual Ministries and the civil service staff associations on the other. Both these conditions had evolved gradually and were firmly established.

In the time available, Sir Paul was able to answer 16 out of a total of 19 questions sent to him in advance. His replies to each of these questions are summarised below :—

QUESTION 1 : If the Civil Service Commission in the U.K. is not consulted in regard to the filling of temporary posts, what happens when posts first sanctioned as temporary become "established" later? Does the Commission then merely look into the suitability of persons already appointed? Or, does it insist on fresh competitive selection from a wider field?

ANSWER : If the Civil Service Commission has not been consulted at the initial stage, it has the right to insist on open competition. In practice, the departments do consult the Commission from the beginning if they consider that the temporary post concerned is likely to become permanent later. At times, competitive test held for absorbing the

temporary personnel into "established" posts is confined to persons already appointed. On other occasions, it covers a wider field. On the whole, there is no general practice.

Some departments, like the Post Office, hold their own open competitive examinations. For recruitment to jobs in local offices, however, such examinations are not feasible.

QUESTION 2 : Does the recruitment to posts calling for high technical qualifications present any special problems ? What happens if the kind of men needed are not likely to offer themselves for competitive selection in response to advertisements ? Is it then left to the Ministries to locate and secure suitable persons and to consult the Commission only on their suitability ?

ANSWER : If a person from outside is to be appointed, the permanent head of the department discusses the names of the few likely candidates with the First Commissioner and makes the final selection in consultation with him. For technical jobs in the second rung of the hierarchy, the mode of recruitment from outside the service depends upon the circumstances of each case. The Commissioners may, in association with the department concerned, interview the candidates and come to a decision.

QUESTION 3 : What is the usual composition of the interview boards set up for selection of candidates for technical services and posts ?

ANSWER : Before the World War II, these appointments were made by the respective Ministries. Since the war, the Civil Service Commission has come into the field. It has an experienced engineer and a scientist among its members. They are responsible for all selections to engineering and scientific posts. The interview boards for technical and

scientific posts are usually presided over by a Civil Service Commissioner, and include as members one senior retired civil servant, one or two professional experts, and two representatives of the department concerned (users' interests). When the number of candidates is large and it is not possible for a Commissioner to be present, a senior government servant acts as the chairman of the board. The latter is selected from a panel of names of retired senior government servants, maintained by the Commission for the purpose. For jobs of technical and mechanical nature, the Commission makes considerable use of outside agencies for conducting trade tests.

QUESTION 4 : *What part, if any, is played by the Civil Service Commission in the U.K. in the recruitment of senior grade staff of the nationalised industries and statutory corporations ?*

ANSWER : The Civil Service Commission does not play any part in the recruitment to nationalised industries and statutory corporations, except in the case of certain posts of the B.B.C. specifically referred to it. The nationalised industries and statutory corporations have their own recruiting procedures and selection boards. The underlying purpose is to give these nationalised industries and statutory corporations flexibility in recruitment in the interest of speed and efficiency.

In the earlier stages of the establishment of statutory corporations and nationalised industries, it was found necessary to transfer administrative personnel from the Civil Service proper, especially for engineering and technical jobs. The number of the personnel of the administrative class lent, at present, to the public sector ranges from 20 to 30.

QUESTION 5 : *There are two schools of thought as to the proper function of Civil Service Commission :*

One view is that the Minister who is responsible to the tax-payer knows best what he needs. The function of the Commission should only be to assure the tax-payer that he is not being saddled with persons who are incompetent or unsuitable for the posts for which they are recruited.

The other view is that some independent authority like the Commission must be there to ensure equality of opportunity and to see that the persons appointed are not merely competent and suitable but also the most competent and the most suitable.

Which of these views is more nearly exemplified in the practice and the conventions followed in the U.K. ?

ANSWER : Sir Paul explained that there was a long history behind both schools of thought. In the early days of the Civil Service Commission the first view generally prevailed. With the passage of time and the gaining of experience, the second view has come to be commonly accepted and it constitutes the present practice. The reasons for preferring the second view are mainly practical and relate to long-term considerations.

QUESTION 6 : *Does the Commission suggest a panel of names or only just as many names as there are posts to be filled ? Where there is a panel, has the Minister to follow the order in which the candidates are named ?*

ANSWER : The Commission usually suggests as many names as there are posts to be filled. If additional vacancies are likely to occur, the Commission sends a panel of names and establishes a strict order of merit to be followed by the department in making appointments. The constitutional position of the Commission vis-a-vis the department in regard to actual appointments is not very clear. In practice, the Commission selects and the head

of the department appoints. In recent years there have been no cases where the department has turned down the recommendations of the Commission. If the department refused to accept the recommendations, the Commission perhaps could not force it to appoint the candidates selected. However, under the Superannuation Acts, unless the person appointed to an "established" (*i.e.* permanent) post is certified by the Commission as suitable he will not be eligible to any retiring pension. Besides, the department would have to face parliamentary and public criticism, as a tradition has grown up that all cases of serious disagreement should be made public by the Commission in its annual reports.

QUESTION 7 : To what extent is the Civil Service Commission in the U.K. consulted in regard to disciplinary action against public servants ?

ANSWER : The Civil Service Commission in the U.K. is not at all concerned with disciplinary matters. The employees can appeal to the head of the department. The civil service staff associations wield great influence and give all support and assistance if they find that the employee has not been fairly treated. On the whole, there is a well established tradition of fairplay and no need has been felt to vest the Civil Service Commission with the power of hearing appeals on disciplinary matters.

QUESTION 8 : Is the possession of a University degree a necessary qualification for any of the competitive examinations or classes of posts ?

QUESTION 9 : Even where no University degree is necessary, is it a fact that the candidates for the higher examinations and higher posts do almost invariably possess a degree ?

ANSWER : The possession of a university degree is a pre-requisite for scientific and technical posts. Theoretically, such a degree is not necessary for

administrative appointments. But in practice, all those who are appointed do hold a degree. The question of possession of a university degree for lower classes of the British Civil Service, e.g. general clerical class, does not arise as recruitment to them is made on the basis of school education only.

QUESTION 10 : How many members are there on the Civil Service Commission in the U.K. and what is the average number of recruitment cases they have to handle per year ?

ANSWER : The present strength of the Civil Service Commission is six members including the First Commissioner. The staff numbers about 450. The Commission uses a large number of examiners who are selected usually from university teachers, retired civil servants and professional men.

The magnitude of recruitment operations varies from time to time and it is not possible to give any definite idea of the work-load which a Commissioner handles.

QUESTION 11 : Have any adaptations in the traditional method of recruitment for Civil Servants been found necessary in the U.K. to meet the growing needs of economic administration ?

QUESTION 12 : If not, how are Civil Servants, without appropriate pre-entry education and training, processed for their specialized responsibilities through suitable post-entry training and experience ?

ANSWER : The traditional methods of recruitment, namely (i) scrutiny of academic records, (ii) written test, and (iii) interview, have so far worked quite satisfactorily. On the whole, a good academic background as revealed by a written examination and a balanced and developed personality as tested by a thorough interview have been found adequate for recruiting personnel to the administrative class.

The requirements of administrative assignments are so varied that any other form of education is not likely to produce any better results. Recently, a combination of group tests and single interviews has been introduced for assessing the personality characteristics for recruitment to certain services, *e.g.* the British Foreign Service and in part the Home Civil Service. Even under this system, known as Method II, while some psychological tests are used, the over-all assessment is based very largely on common sense judgment of candidates.

In the U.K. the new recruits are trained by actually doing the job under the supervision and guidance of experienced senior officials. Special post-entry training schemes are not much developed. The present mode of training on the job is considered much more advantageous than theoretical courses given in a class-room. It aims at making the new entrants be 'quick on their toes', *i.e.* capable of shouldering heavy responsibilities at a very young age. The problem of training new entrants in judicial and revenue administration does not exist in the U.K., as it does in India. The duration of the training period is, therefore, shorter in that country.

A significant post-war development concerns the introduction of the system of foreign study and travel leave for promising young civil servants. This leave is granted up to a maximum duration of one year. It helps in broadening the outlook of civil servants and extending their knowledge of contemporary administrative problems.

The Administrative Staff College at Henley-on-Thames gives three months' training courses for trainees drawn from all large scale organisations—civil service, local government, private industry, and the nationalised sector. These training courses enable the different kinds of administrators to understand and appreciate each other's point of view and

operative methods and to bind together the various sides of national life.

QUESTION 13 : What are the steps taken in the U.K. to ensure that the best quality of candidates is forthcoming into the Superior Grade of the Civil Service, apart from making recruitment through the medium of competitive examination ?

ANSWER : Generally speaking, till recently the British Civil Service had no difficulty in getting a fair share of the best university graduates. Since the Second World War, university graduates have been entering private industry in large numbers. The British Civil Service does not now attract a sufficient number of people of adequate ability. The Civil Service Commission maintains regular informal contact with the heads of higher educational institutions and the University Appointment Boards. During the World War II experienced and talented men from outside were brought into the Civil Service as a special case. This development, however, did not survive, as it was felt that it might ultimately end in a spoils system. The general opinion is still in favour of having a Civil Service whose members regard it as a life career.

QUESTION 14 : Are the salaries of Covenanted Officers in the employ of private firms larger in effect than the salaries of Civil Servants ? Is the difference appreciable ? If so, what steps are taken by Government to ensure that the best material does not get recruited to the firms or the trade instead of the Civil Service ?

ANSWER : The salaries of the civil servants are generally kept in line with the long-term salary trends in other sectors of the national economy. At present a Royal Commission is going into the question of salaries. Its report is expected sometime during the current year.

QUESTION 15 : *If, as is generally reported, corruption is practically non-existent in the British Civil Service, to which among the following factors would you attribute so praiseworthy a state of affairs :*

- (b) *Careful recruitment and training;*
- (b) *the national character;*
- (c) *detailed rules and regulations restricting the scope for the exercise of discretion; or*
- (d) *the existence of effective public opinion and of anti-corruption agencies ?*

Are there any other factors ?

ANSWER : Corruption is generally non-existent in the U.K. Careful recruitment and training is partly responsible for this. In view of the corrupt recruitment practices prevalent till the early 19th century, it is difficult to say that the national character of the British people accounts for the absence of corruption. However, the extraordinary change in the general morality in the U.K. during the last 60 years or so has contributed considerably towards the present praiseworthy state of affairs. A careful and scrupulous audit check (and *not* detailed rules and regulations restricting discretion) and effective public opinion are also partly responsible for the high level of honesty and integrity of the British civil servants. Another very important factor is the existence of a strong professional pride in the civil service itself. This pride has its roots in the career aspect of the civil service. Short-term assignments in civil service are likely to disrupt its career character and pave the way for a spoils system.

QUESTION 16 : *Does the distinguished guest-speaker feel that India will have to adopt some policy of recruitment like the one adopted by the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt to push his New Deal programme*

in view of the fact that India intends to plan her development in a way that the Government and the public sector are going to play a major role ? (The essence of the problem lies in ensuring that administration should be in the hands of those who are enthusiastic about our Plans.)

ANSWER : During the World War II, the recruitment of talented and experienced personnel from outside inducted new blood into the British Civil Service. This was perhaps made somewhat unavoidable by the exigencies of the war. This development, however, has not continued.

Recruitment of able and experienced personnel from private industry and professions in the U.S.A. for the purpose of pushing the New Deal did help in executing the government plans with speed and efficiency, but it would be too much to say that it did not reinforce and extend the spoils system.

The problem of bringing into civil service talented persons from outside with the object of speeding up the execution of India's development plans was for India herself to solve, and Sir Paul observed that he would be anxiously watching the steps which India took in this matter. He, however, cautioned that the induction of new blood from outside was likely to strengthen patronage unless suitable safeguards were adopted.

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Thanking Sir Paul Sinker on behalf of the Institute and its members, present at the meeting, Prof. D.G. Karve observed that India owed a good deal to the U.K. for its administrative machinery and traditions. Though the common administrative link existed no longer since the attainment of independence, Prof. Karve felt that both the U.K. and India could profit a lot from sharing each other's administrative experiences.

Sir Paul Sinker, K.C.M.G., C.B.*

Sir Paul Sinker, K.C.M.G., C.B., has been Director-General of the British Council since June, 1954.

Sir Paul Sinker, who is 48, was educated at Haileybury and Jesus College, Cambridge. He became a Fellow of Jesus College in 1927 and, after studying in the University of Vienna, returned to Cambridge as Tutor and University Lecturer.

From 1940 to 1945 he was at the Admiralty as a temporary civil servant and served in Washington in 1941-42. From 1945 to 1950 he was Director of Civil Service Training at the Treasury. He was *First Commissioner of the Civil Service Commission* from 1951 until his appointment to the British Council in 1954.

He was Chairman of a Commission on the Sierra Leone Civil Service in 1953 and acted as adviser to the Egyptian Government on Civil Service questions in 1950.

Sir Paul Sinker was born at Slough and was brought up at Southport, where his father was Vicar of St. Paul's.

He became C.B. in 1950 and K.C.M.G. in the Birthday Honours of 1954.

* By the courtesy of the British Council.

Indian Institute of Public Administration

The Indian Institute of Public Administration was established in March 1954 under the presidentship of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India.

The principal objects of the Institute are : to provide for the study of public administration and allied subjects by organising study and training courses, conferences and discussion groups; to undertake research in matters relating to public administration and the machinery of government; to publish periodicals, research papers and books on Indian administration ; and to serve as a forum for exchange of ideas and experiences and a clearing house of information on public administration in general.

The Institute has been recognised as the National Section for India of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences.

A regional branch of the Institute has recently been established in Bombay.

The Institute's membership is open to all persons who are actively interested in or concerned with the study or practice of public administration. The minimum annual subscription for individual membership is Rs. 25/-

Any registered business establishment, joint stock company, educational institution, government authority or approved association of public servants can be admitted as Corporate Member on such conditions as may be specified in each case by the Executive Council of the Institute.

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